

Baraga County EDC Business Resiliency Guide

re·sil·ience- the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Businesses face ups and downs all the time for a variety of reasons. It's part of doing business. However, we encourage business owners to control the things they can. With that in mind, we have put together this Business Resiliency Guide with some possible ways to make your business stronger and enable it to be flexible during difficult cycles.

- 1. Correct staffing issues.** During a crisis, leaders will be revealed. Take note of who is stepping up and reward them. Take note of who is struggling and work with them to improve or encourage them to seek employment elsewhere. Make sure you follow best practices for separating an employee from employment in Michigan, and within the letter of the [new labor laws](#) under the CARES Act.
- 2. Create incentives for customers.** Incentives for customers could include waiving re-booking fees, adding premium services, or bonus upgrades. If you have the capacity, consider offering discounts for early payment or free or discounted product to incentivize other purchases.
- 3. Invest in some “face to face” marketing.** Reintroduce yourself to customers. This might include things like dropping off a dozen doughnuts to a customer's office with your business card stapled to it. Go the extra mile and partner up with a local bakery to deliver their doughnuts to your customers. Creating a win-win situation for you both! Consider working with your local Chamber of Commerce to host a Business After Hours or like event to spend time with customers and prospects personally.

4. **Become an online freelancer.** Remember, your customers may not only be down the street. They may be on the other side of the globe. Exporting doesn't only apply to products. It's easy to understand that technology driven workers like a web designer or app developer can do online freelance work, but did you know that accountants, attorneys, and even HVAC system designers can do freelance work online? Check out [UPwork](#) or [Freelancer](#), create a profile, and start bidding on jobs.
5. **Create short-term, strategic, and informal partnerships with your competitors.** Ever heard of "coopetition?" By teaming up with a competitor or other similar business in your industry sector, you might be able to purchase products at a discounted rate, share labor, or share equipment and reduce each other's overhead expenses. Whatever you decide, make sure you both have a solid understanding of the role each business has with one another.
6. **Create a digital product.** For some this may seem like an impossible feat. How can a hotel, personal trainer or architect create a digital product? Perhaps you don't currently possess the skills, but the point is you need to at least think about how your services have been delivered, how they could be delivered, and explore your assets. Customer experiences have changed. Think like a consumer. Work with your economic developer to explore these avenues.

7. **Become a guerilla marketer.** Guerilla marketing is a phrase that is used to define a type of marketing that is creative, low cost, and memorable. Guerilla marketers think outside of the box and strive to make their advertising creative and effective. [Reverse graffiti](#) is a great example of guerrilla marketing.
8. **Sell assets that are not generating revenue.** Selling off underperforming assets will free up needed cash. Ask yourself this question, "If I didn't already own it, would I buy it today?" If the answer is "no" then that means you probably need to sell it. Also think about a different type of customer or different type of sales platform. That bolt of fabric at the fabric store that reminds you of your senior year of high school in 1985 and makes you wonder what people were thinking back then? Guess what, it's back in fashion with the younger generation. So, the customer you think you have for an unproductive asset may not be who *actually wants* that thing today.
9. **Beat your customer's expectations.** When consumers are stressed, you have the chance to make a doubly great impression or a lousy one that will not be forgotten. Repeat customers are easier and cheaper to find than brand new ones. If you make a great impression you will be remembered and talked about. The same goes if you make a bad impression. If you are pivoting your business to a slightly new model or mode of business, make sure you have the internal capabilities to make the switch. For example, if you are a restaurant accepting to go orders, take a realistic look at your capacity to fulfill those orders in a reasonable amount of time. Making customers wait in their car for 50 minutes to pick up dinner won't help long-term brand loyalty.

Resilient companies do better at the start of a downturn and come out of the downturn in a better position. Also remember, if you can't accomplish these things while the business is trying to operate it may be worth considering hibernating your business. That may give more time and relieve some pressure.

It's our hope that one or two of these ideas will help push you in a new direction and will help your business become more resilient and stronger in the long run.

Share Great Ideas

If you have implemented a great idea that's working for your business, or heard of one, please share it with us so we can spread the concept to other businesses in the Upper Peninsula.

If you need help applying them to your business or are looking for other generalized business help, please contact **Mary Myers** at 231.409.9065 or mary@marquette.org

Thank you to our friends at Grow Great Falls Montana
for sharing this resource with the business folks of the Upper Peninsula!